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Should Nepal be a Hindu State or a Secular State?

Pawan Kumar Sen

This paper is based on longitudinal public opinion surveys conducted between September 2006 and April 2012. In it I argue that, according to this survey data, the majority of Nepali people still want Nepal to be a Hindu state. However, a significant number of Nepalis wish to see their country as a secular state. The surveys also reveal that the public's preference toward the Hindu state is not accepted in all sub-national levels; a preference for a secular state is evident in some of the sub-national levels, which cannot be undervalued. This paper also establishes that the public's opinion on the issue of secularism significantly corroborates the public's opinion on the issues of federalism and republicanism.

The partial correlation and multiple regression analyses confirm that the public's support toward one new feature of the state (secularism) agrees with another new feature of the state (federalism/republicanism), and vice-versa. Nepali identity before April 2006 was

promoted based on monocultural values, which favored particular dominant groups. Other groups felt suppressed and excluded from the mainstream course of the state. Therefore, state recognition of multicultural values is a must in this time of political transition while conceptualizing a new form of Nepali identity. I argue that this will bring a sense of ownership of the state to all groups. As the process of writing a new constitution is currently underway, Nepal has the opportunity to legally recognize the voice of the minority. If Nepal's democracy is to be made inclusive, a new Constitution needs to reflect the voice of the minority in its clauses. This not only guarantees the arrival of an inclusive democracy, but also makes the entire populace, including its minorities, true owners of the land and its Constitution.

Keywords: Hinduism, identity, public opinion, secularism, multiculturalism.

Introduction

This paper presents a historical analysis of religious issue and investigates the dynamic of the Nepali public's general view on whether Nepal should be a Hindu state or a secular state by using findings of seven longitudinal public opinion polls conducted between September 2006 and April 2012. It divulges what the Nepali general public (i.e. common Nepali populace above 18 years of age) thinks on the issue during this time, and how their opinions toward this issue undergo changes over time. Variations in the opinion polls by religion, ethnicity, geographical region, educational status, age group, and political party preference have been examined too. A primary reason for paying much attention to these six variables is that these are arguably the explanatory variables which significantly influence the public's view on the state restructuring issues and are identified to be the statistically significant explanatory variables through multiple regression analyses¹ (tables of analyses are given in Annex-1).

The opinion polls reveal that the majority of the Nepali public still prefer a Hindu state at the national level (i.e. on the whole). They consist of predominantly Hindus, hill caste groups, *madhesi* caste groups, Tarai indigenous groups, and supporters of Nepali Congress, rightist parties, and Tarai based regional parties. But, the proportion of those who support secularism is also very significant, and even forms the majority at some of the sub-national levels: among Buddhists, Muslims, *Kirati*, Christians, hill indigenous groups, and supporters of most of the Communist parties. So, the Nepali state's official association with Hinduism is not universally accepted. The polls also confirm that supporters of republicanism and federalism are more likely to support secularism, while supporters of monarchy and a unitary state are more likely to support a Hindu state. At this time of transition, while the drafting of the new Constitution is still underway and obligated to follow a framework of republicanism and federalism², the state's identity with secularism is justified.

The Historical Context

Nepal has been constituted as a Hindu kingdom since its foundation in 1768. The Nepali monarchy had a historical affiliation with Hinduism; particularly with the hill variant of Hinduism³, which varied greatly from the orthodox Hinduism found in the plains of the river Ganges. The Hindu high caste hill groups (that consist of *chhetri*, *bahun*, and *thakuri*) had the highest social status, by which they were able to control the state's resources, and enjoyed all types of powers and privileges while disproportionately excluding non-hill Hindus (i.e. *madhesi* Hindus), non-Nepali

language speakers, non-hill residents and so-called 'lower-caste' Hindus (i.e. untouchables now known as *dalit*). The two fundamental characteristics of the Nepali state, Hindu monarchy and the state's official affiliation with Hinduism, were taken as inseparable components of the state's structure.

Nepal's rulers institutionalized the hill variant of the Hindu and hierarchical caste systems, as the so-called Hindu high caste hill groups felt superior to others, while the marginalized others felt inferior to the former. This caused the hill indigenous groups (who were basically non-Hindus), Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, *dalit*, and *madhesi* people to feel discriminated against. But since the end of the nineties, when multi-party democracy was reinstated in the country resulting from the success of the April 1990 people's movement (i.e. *Jan Andolan I*, which literally means 'the first wave of the people's movement'), increasing numbers of people had begun to question the rationale behind the state's affiliation with Hinduism. Particularly, it was articulated by *janajati* (indigenous) activists and leaders (elaborated upon in the next section). The Maoist movement has also amplified the identity issue and defied the religious, cultural, and linguistic monopoly of the Hindu high caste hill groups since 1996, when it started an insurgency against the Nepali state. The dominance of the Hindu high caste hill groups across ethnic, religious, linguistic and regionalist lines was regarded as a salient cause of the Maoist struggle (Mishra 2007: 109).

In the 40-point list of demands put forward by the United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (UCPN [Maoist])⁴ to the government just before they formally began the armed conflict in February 1996, one demand was directly related to the secular state. In Point no. 18 of that list, the UCPN (Maoist) clearly demanded for the secular state by writing down, "Nepal should be declared a secular nation" (Thapa and Sijapati 2003: 214). However, the major political parties of Nepal - including the Nepali Congress and Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist) (CPN [UML]) - had not questioned the state's affiliation with Hinduism before King Gyanendra's move in February 2005, the time when the king declared a state of emergency and took all executive powers. During the writing of Nepal's 1990 Constitution, the Nepali Congress was guided by their great leader Bisheshwar Prasad Koirala's policy of 'national reconciliation' with the monarchy.⁵ In contrast, the United Left Front (ULF), a coalition of seven leftist parties, did not have strong support from the public to challenge and let alone abolish the monarchy (Malagodi 2013: 136). After the king's declaration of emergency in February 2005, the major mainstream political parties and the UCPN (Maoist)

moved closer to each other, and an alliance between them was formed. The UCPN (Maoist), who had begun the armed insurgency against the state from 1996 onwards, was opposed to the 1990 Constitution. This party was insistently in opposition to the Hindu-favored provisions in the Constitution. It called for ending the special privileges given to the so-called 'high caste' Hindus in terms of religion, culture, language, etc. and for the replacement of the 1990 Constitution and other laws based on Hinduism with a new one based on secularism. The mainstream political parties accepted the demands of the UCPN (Maoist). So, secularism was only a means for the political parties to remove the religious basis of the king's power, rather than their own state restructuring issue (Letizia 2011: 76). To reciprocate it, the UCPN (Maoist) also accepted the multiparty competitive system and agreed to come under the peace process.

After the April 2006 people's movement (commonly known as *Jan Andolan II*) called by the Seven-Party Alliance⁶ and the UCPN (Maoist), the House of Representatives was reinstated and issued a political declaration that proclaimed Nepal a secular state, along with other important decisions such as the reduction in perks and privileges of the king, the removing of the 'Royal' title from state institutions, the bringing of the Army under government control, etc. An Interim Legislature-Parliament was established in January 2007 by including representatives of UCPN (Maoist) and other political parties who were represented in the reinstated House of Representatives. The Interim Legislature-Parliament endorsed the 'Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007' on 15 January 2007 replacing the previous 'Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990'. The Interim Constitution abolished some of the core features of the Nepali state. One of the core features of the state that the Interim Constitution brought to an end was the Nepali state's symbiotic association with the Hindu religion. The Interim Constitution formally declared Nepal a secular state.⁷ However, this did not satisfy the hill indigenous and *madhesi* leaders, as it did not explicitly mention republicanism and federalism in its clause. The hill indigenous and *madhesi* leaders organized protest movements (commonly known as *Janajati Andolan* and *Madhes Andolan*) to show their anxiety, demanding that the Interim Constitution be amended in order to take into account the concerns of the hill indigenous and *madhesi* people.

On 28 December 2007, the Interim Legislature-Parliament approved a bill to amend the Interim Constitution with a view to incorporating the demands raised by the hill indigenous and *madhesi* leaders. The amendment guaranteed republicanism and federalism by stating Nepal a federal democratic republic state in its Article 4(1).⁸ This declaration was formalized in May 2008 through the first sitting

of the Constituent Assembly. The official connection of the state with the Hindu religion formally ended, together with the abolition of the monarchy.

Nepali Identity and Hindu Religion

Prithvi Narayan Shah (reigned 1768–1775), the king of a small hill principality called Gorkha located at the center of present-day Nepal, founded the Gorkhali Empire (subsequently known as Kingdom of Nepal⁹) in 1768 by conquering other small principalities spread across the region, including three small principalities of the Kathmandu Valley. His successors further expanded the empire through conquests and brought the empire to its present geographical shape.¹⁰ During and after the expansion of the Gorkhali Empire, Gorkhali (now known as Nepali) identity had been constructed on the basis of the culture, religion and language of the Gorkhali rulers and elites themselves, who belonged to Hindu high caste hill groups. These rulers and elite thus attempted to create an artificial homogeneous national identity by promoting Nepali (previously known as the Gorkhali language, *Khaskura*, or *Parbatekura*) as the only state language, along with the Hindu religion and Hindu monarchy. This naturally marginalized and even excluded cultures, religions, and languages of others from the state's structures. This long-term project of enforced homogenization thus effectively rejected the notion of national identity of the Nepali people based on multicultural values.¹¹ Ultimately, the Hindu high caste hill groups, and their cultural values, religion and language, became the dominant and privileged features of Nepal's state and society, while other groups such as non-Hindu *janajati* (indigenous groups), Hindu lower-caste *dalit* (untouchables in the Hindu caste system), and non-Nepali speaking *madhesi* (low-land people who lived in Nepal's Tarai region) were excluded from the mainstream of the Nepali state and ended up as the under-privileged and marginalized groups.

Many historical texts illustrate that Prithvi Narayan Shah wanted to make his kingdom *asal Hindustan*, or a true and sacred Hindu land, uncontaminated by Muslim and Christian rules. One of these sources is a famous text known as *Dibya Upadesh*, which is a collection of advices given by Prithvi Narayan Shah to his courtiers before his death. As the southern neighbor, India, was first ruled by the Mughal (Muslim rule) and then by the British (Christian rule), 'Hinduization' became the state ideology of Nepal since its existence (Gurung 2003: 2). In this context, the view of Prayag Raj Sharma (1997: 478), a leading scholar of Nepali history and society, is very important: he says that "The motivation for combining all the hill states into a single, powerful entity was not merely personal ambition but the wish to build a sacred Hindu land, distinct

from and secure against the non-believing Muglan and the English 'Phiringis' poised on the coast." Harka Gurung, a prominent social scientist of the country, calls this act of Hinduization the *raison d'être* of the Nepali state between British India and imperial China (Gurung 1997: 501). Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successors promoted the hill Hindu caste system, dividing the society into higher and lower castes in their new empire. The hill Hindu caste system, which was a vertically constructed hierarchy by nature, was not based on equality among different groups in society, but based on an unequal social status determined by birth and geographical origin. Thus, an unequal, hierarchical society in favor of the Hindu high caste hill groups and to the detriment of all the others (including indigenous groups, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, *madhesi* Hindus, and Hindu *dalit*) was promoted in Nepal as soon as it was founded. However, it is worthwhile to recall that the hierarchical caste system was already entrenched in the principality of Gorkha before the unification started,¹² even though the system was not as rigid as it was to become later (Whelpton 1997: 63). In the Kathmandu valley, King Jayasthiti Malla had already introduced the caste system to *newars* in the late fourteenth century, which categorized *newars* into sixty-four¹³ castes according to the Hindu social code based on a hierarchical caste system (Gurung 1997: 501; Ahuti 2004: 484).

In order to strengthen the Hinduization in the country, King Ran Bahadur Shah (reigned 1777–1806) prohibited cow killing in 1805¹⁴ (Michaels 1997: 86). Jung Bahadur Rana, the then Prime Minister and the founder of the oligarchic Rana regime, introduced the first civil code, *Muluki Ain*, in 1854 to be effective in the entire Kingdom based on the Hindu caste system and values. This civil code further ensured the higher status of the Hindu high caste hill group at the cost of others. It imposed Hindu caste rules (i.e. the Hindu hierarchical caste system) on egalitarian indigenous groups, giving them inferior status (Gurung 1997: 501). This civil code formalized discriminatory punishments of people from different castes for the same crimes. For example, *chhetri*, *thakuri*, indigenous groups, and *dalit* could be sentenced to death or enslaved for crimes such as adultery and murder, while *brahman* received lighter punishment, such as hair shaving and subsequent downgrading in caste for the same crimes (Hofer 1979: 80, 108). *Brahman* was even exempted from some obligations to the state, such as certain taxes and compulsory labor (Lawoti 2010: 87). With the promulgation of *Muluki Ain*, the ban on cow killing was made much stricter in order to protect holiness of the cow. The Rana regime actually wanted to control and homogenize remote areas and indigenous groups through this civil code (Michaels, 1997: 90). The

centrality of the Hindu religion and values in the state's structure continued even after the abolition of the Rana regime in 1951. Though there were some political and economic reforms, the "predatory character" of the Nepali state, as said by Toffin (2010: 43), did not change much, and the supremacy of hill *brahman* and *chhetri* on political and economic resources continued unabated. The country was formally declared a Hindu kingdom under the new Constitution promulgated under the Panchayat regime (1960–1990) in 1962. Executive power of the Hindu king, and entrenchment of Hindu values in the state institutions and public policies, was established through the 1962 Constitution. The period of the Panchayat regime was the time during which the Nepali state made intensive efforts to evolve itself into a nation-state with a common culture and language (Pradhan 2002: 11). The state's official association with the Hindu religion still continued with the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal in 1990 under multiparty democracy, which designated Nepal as a Hindu state.¹⁵

Identity movements by indigenous and other marginalized groups began to take place in the country, demanding equal rights including kindred religious freedoms after 1951, when the Nepal became open with the abolition of the oligarchic Rana regime and the instatement of multiparty democracy. However, the movements were not strong enough to change the old structure of the Nepali state. It was only after the restoration of the multiparty democracy in 1990 as an outcome of the *Jan Andolan I* that political leaders and activists from historically excluded groups such as *janajati* and other non-Hindu communities had begun to demand a more inclusive democracy including full religious rights of following one's conscience. An umbrella organization called the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) was established in July 1990, and brought together about 20 of the ethnic and cultural associations. They began to assert their rights and identities with a new intensity. They demanded the state to recognize their unique culture, religion and language. Various groups and associations contested the Hindu identity of the Nepali state when the Constitution was being formulated between May and October 1990. There were demonstrations by Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim associations, and ethnic organizations representing the predominantly non-Hindu hill indigenous groups, which demanded Nepal to be declared a secular state. This stance was supported by leftist, liberal, and republican elements (Hutt 1993: 37; Pfaff-Czarnecka 1997: 444; Sharma 1997: 488). The grievances of the hill indigenous groups and other non-Hindu groups against the Hindu state were intertwined with their perceptions of the state having privileged the culture and religion of the Hindu high caste hill group.

Even though the 1990 Constitution recognized Nepal as a multi-ethnic and multilingual nation, it retained the Hindu identity of the state.¹⁶ Thus, the identity movements after *Jan Andolan I* too could not bring significant reforms in the structure of the Nepali state. However, an open atmosphere (i.e. the freedom of expression and other rights) guaranteed by the 1990 Constitution provided ample opportunities for ethnicity and identity-based movements within the established political structure. This compelled the state to recognize cultures, religions, and languages of all the marginalized groups. It allowed a space for the assertion of voices from the excluded, under-privileged, and marginalized people. Non-Hindu indigenous groups and other religious minorities continued to demand Nepal become a secular state instead of a Hindu state (Hoftun 1993: 19; Toffin 2006: 233; Malagodi 2010: 68). Many of them also demanded a right to slaughter cows.¹⁷ The United Nations' 1994 declaration of the "International Decade of the World's Indigenous People" for the period between 1995 and 2005 also added to the debate on cultural recognition and minority rights in Nepal. The Maoist movement further amplified the identity issue as it defied the cultural and religious monopoly of the Hindu high caste hill groups since the mid-nineties, when UCPN (Maoist) started an insurgency against the Nepali state. Along with other rights, it demanded equal religious rights for indigenous and non-Hindu groups, and called for ending the state's alignment with Hinduism (including monarchy). These movements brought the issue of various rights including the religious right to the forefront. Exclusionary strategies of the Nepali state even after *Jan Andolan I* were the root cause of the emergence of identity movements (Lawoti 2010: 73).

After *Jan Andolan II* of April 2006, the demands for secularism, republicanism, federalism, and multilingualism gained ground. With the endorsement of the Interim Constitution of Nepal in January 2007, the Nepali state's century-old association with Hindu religion was formally eliminated and the country was declared a secular state. The declaration of secularism was taken as a major contribution to the modernization of 'New Nepal' (Letizia 2011: 70). Indeed, it was an important move of the Nepali state toward institutionalizing a new Nepali identity based on multiculturalism.

State Restructuring Issues at Present and the Hindu Religion in Nepal

Basic characteristics of the Nepali state - (i) the Hindu monarchy, (ii) the unitary form of governance, (iii) the state ideology based on Hinduism, and (iv) the promotion of Nepali language as the only official language - were nullified after the success of *Jan Andolan II*. These four components had been the four pillars of the Nepali state

until 2006. A sentence written by Prayag Raj Sharma might be appropriate to repeat here: "Prithvi Narayan Shah and those after him, based the country's unification on four key ideas: the unquestioning power and authority of the Hindu King of Gorkha, the supremacy of the Hindu ethos in national life, social integration through Hindu social system based on caste division, and recognition of Nepali as the language of government, administration and, in more recent times, education" (Sharma 1992: 7). With the success of *Jan Andolan II*, Nepal's political parties conceptualized a new form of the structure of the state: secularism, republicanism, federalism, and multilingualism. By the first sitting of an elected Constituent Assembly held on 28 May 2008, Nepal was formally transformed from a Hindu state to a secular state, from a monarchy to a republic, from a unitary state to a federal state, and from a single-linguistic state to a multi-linguistic state. Secularism, republicanism, federalism and multilingualism are the four most important new state restructuring issues in present-day Nepal, but from here on, this paper will concentrate only on the issue of secularism. Detailed examination of the other state restructuring issues is beyond the scope of this paper. However, their relationship with the religious issue has been investigated by employing multiple regression analyses in the polls data. The main reason for examining this relationship is to understand how the public opinions on other state restructuring issues converge to or diverge from the religious issue.

Methodology of the Public Opinion Polls

The opinion poll data used in this article are from two series of longitudinal opinion surveys based on a random (probability) sampling: one is called "Nepal Contemporary Political Situation" or NCPS; the other is called "People's Perception of Safety and Security" or PPSS. The author is one of the principal researchers in both survey series.

These polls have geographically represented every part of the country in their samples, and each of these polls had a sample size of 3,000 respondents. They have employed random (probability) sampling techniques in all stages (from district level to respondent level). Districts were selected employing stratified random sampling, where stratification was based on five development regions and three ecological regions. Villages (i.e. Village Development Committees [VDCs]) and municipalities within the sample districts were selected by employing simple random sampling. Wards within the sample VDCs and municipalities were selected through simple random sampling as well. Households within the sample wards were selected through the random-walk method,¹⁸ and finally respondents of age 18 and above within the sample households were selected

for interviews using the Kish-grid (i.e. a table of random numbers).¹⁹ In this way, the polls have followed the random (probability) sampling techniques at every stage, so that the findings of these polls could be generalized in the context of the entire population under study.²⁰ The random (probability) sampling is the only scientific basis that allows drawing an inference from a sample to a population, though there is always a small degree of deviation between a sample and a population (O'Muircheartaigh 2008).

Field supervisors and interviewers with sufficient experience were deployed in the field to take interviews of respondents at their homes. The survey teams were as inclusive as possible in terms of language, ethnicity, region, and gender. Before deploying the teams, two-day orientation trainings were conducted for them on the survey research methodology, their roles and responsibilities, and the field operations plan. They also had the sampling techniques explained. They were also made acquainted with the structured questionnaire format, so that they became fully familiar with the intention of each of the questions.

The samples of these surveys have, indeed, truly represented the national population. The sample composition in terms of ethnicity, sex, age group, region, religion, etc. was very much consistent with the population composition as per Nepal's 2001 national census (Sharma and Sen 2006: 9-10; Sharma and Sen 2008: 11-13; Sharma and Khadka 2011: 9-13). Annex-3 shows the detailed breakdowns of the samples across various demographic variables and their comparison with the national population. Therefore, the author claims that the findings of these two survey series closely mirror opinions of the entire adult population of Nepali citizens with a certain but tiny margin of error, not only of the sample respondents.²¹ In other words, the findings of these surveys are generalizable to the entire population.

Every wave of polls in these series more or less has followed the same methodology, because of which their findings are comparable with each other, and trend analysis can be conducted on their findings.²² The samples of these surveys truly represent the national population. The sample composition in terms of ethnicity, sex, age group, region, religion, etc. was very much consistent with the population composition as per Nepal's 2001 national census.

The Hindu State Versus the Secular State: Opinions From the People

The issue of secularism has an important bearing in the present situation of Nepal, where the task of drafting of

a new constitution has not yet been completed. In this context, the country should listen to the voices of its all people: both majority and minority, both advantaged and disadvantaged, and both dominant and marginalized. It is crucial that those responsible for drafting and enacting the new constitution should recognize the voices of the entire spectrum of the people, not of only majority, advantaged and dominant.

Seven collective waves of opinion polls from the two survey series, NCPS and PPSS, were conducted between September 2006 and April 2012 (see Figure-1 below for the survey dates). In September 2006 (the first time the survey asked a question on secularism, "Do you think Nepal should be a Hindu state or a secular state?"), a comfortable majority (59 percent) favors Nepal being a Hindu state. Some 31 percent favor Nepal becoming a secular state. There have been continuities in the public's opinion on this particular issue. Over the time period between 2006 and 2012, there are no significant ruptures in the trend. So, in spite of Nepal's political parties' decision to declare the country a secular state, a majority of the general citizens still want their country to remain a Hindu state at the national level. However, it can be argued that in a country where more than 80 percent of the population identify themselves as Hindu, only slightly more than 50 percent favoring a Hindu state means that a sizeable proportion of the Hindu population also think that the Hindu religion should not be closely or preferentially associated with the state. This becomes clearer afterward when the data is disaggregated at the sub-national level. The public opinion survey conducted in Sep 2006 (the only public opinion survey discussed in this paper in which reasons behind why the people think Nepal should be a Hindu state or a secular state were asked) finds that a majority of the people want Nepal to be a Hindu state because Hindu religion is a part of tradition, and Nepal has always been a Hindu state and is identified as a Hindu state by the world. Whereas some people want Nepal to be a secular state because religious freedom and rights of the religious minorities can be ensured only in a secular state (Sharma and Sen 2006: 34-35). Contemporary researchers on the religious issues, too, say that the former group of people's aspiration to retain a Hindu state is connected to their fear of proselytization by other religions and cow slaughter (Sharma 2002: 30; Letizia 2011: 81), while the latter group of people's desire for a secular state is associated with their demand of equal religious, cultural and linguistic identity rights, thereby rejecting Hindu high caste domination (Letizia 2011: 71, 2013: 34; Malagodi 2013: 129).

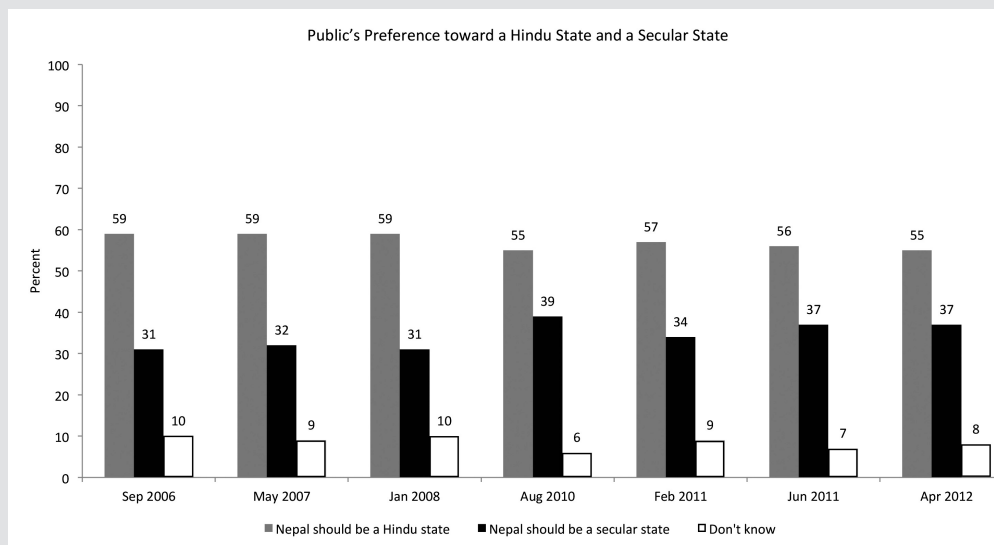


Figure 1. Public's Preference toward a Hindu State and a Secular State. Base for Sep 2006 was 3000, for May 2007: 3010, Jan 2008: 3010, Aug 2010: 3000, Feb 2011: 3000, Jun 2011: 3000 and Apr 2012: 3010.

Only slightly more than 60 percent of Hindus prefer Nepal to be a Hindu state between September 2006 and April 2012. This proportion is almost stable throughout this period at the national level. However, at the sub-national level, preference toward a Hindu state among the people who prac-

tice Buddhism, Islam, *Kirat*, and Christianity has drastically decreased over the period, and has become significantly lower than those who practiced Hinduism. Particularly, Muslims, *Kiratis*, and Christians have the lowest level of support toward a Hindu state.

	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	59	59	59	55	57	56	55
Hindu	65	66	68	62	64	63	62
Buddhist	35	23	12	23	31	18	24
Muslim	15	6	9	10	17	13	10
Kirati	8	10	13	9	16	16	6
Christian	31	6	18	23	10	24	2

Table 1. Public's Preference toward a Hindu State by Religion.

On the other hand, a majority of the Buddhist, Muslim, *Kirati*, and Christian populace want Nepal to be a secular state. This clearly shows that neither did Buddhist people want Nepal as a Buddhist state, nor Muslim people desire

an Islamic state. The same held true among the *Kirati* and Christian people. They only want a secular state. They do not want Nepal being a religious state.

	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	31	32	31	39	34	37	37
Hindu	27	26	23	32	29	31	31
Buddhist	47	62	71	68	49	67	64
Muslim	73	79	83	90	73	75	71
Kirati	75	78	75	87	69	64	81
Christian	56	91	79	77	90	76	84

Table 2. Public's Preference toward a Secular State by Religion.

With regard to the public's preference toward a Hindu state or a secular state, there is a clear division of opinion along the various ethnic groups.²³ The surveys reveal that a majority of the hill caste group and *madhesi* communities (i.e. the *madhesi* caste group, Tarai indigenous group and

madhesi dalit), excluding Muslims, are the ones who want to see Nepal as a Hindu state. Levels of preference toward a Hindu state among hill *dalit* and *newar* are also high. Support toward a Hindu state is significantly low among the hill indigenous group and Muslims.²⁴

	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	59	59	59	55	57	56	55
Hill caste group	59	61	65	64	65	67	62
Hill indigenous group	36	41	31	29	38	31	31
Hill Dalit	52	66	55	57	57	60	56
Newar	65	54	59	60	56	66	56
Madhesi caste group	75	75	84	66	71	76	76
Tarai indigenous group	81	75	69	66	70	36	62
Madhesi Dalit	74	69	91	71	73	70	63
Muslim	15	6	10	15	18	15	10

Table 3. Public's Preference toward a Hindu State by Ethnicity.

The surveys also clearly show that two communities, the hill indigenous group and Muslims, are the ones who want Nepal to be a secular state, not a Hindu state. The former

group has a fragile connection with Hinduism, while the latter group has no affiliation with Hinduism, only with Islam.

	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	31	32	31	39	34	37	37
Hill caste group	34	32	27	31	28	30	34
Hill indigenous group	45	46	50	59	45	58	56
Hill Dalit	41	22	25	33	34	30	32
Newar	31	38	36	35	34	30	39
Madhesi caste group	15	20	15	32	24	19	20
Tarai indigenous group	14	14	19	32	25	52	30
Madhesi Dalit	12	24	6	22	24	16	22
Muslim	73	81	82	85	72	73	70

Table 4. Public's Preference toward a Secular State by Ethnicity.

Out of the five development regions, the highest level of public's preference toward a Hindu state is in the Far-Western development region. About three fourths of the people living in this region (73 percent) want Nepal to be

a Hindu state as of April 2012. The Eastern and Central development regions also showed a substantial level of support for a Hindu state.

	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	59	59	59	55	57	56	55
Eastern	58	59	41	44	61	46	64
Central	68	62	68	54	54	64	58
Western	46	55	66	58	48	58	39
Mid-Western	33	63	49	59	58	41	33
Far-Western	76	52	61	69	80	60	73

Table 5. Public's Preference toward a Hindu State by Development Region.

As of April 2012, the highest level of the public's support toward a secular state is in the Mid-Western and Western development regions. The trend of support toward secularism increased in these two regions between

September 2006 and April 2012. This might be due to the significant presence of indigenous groups in the hills and Muslims in Tarai within these two regions.

	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	31	32	31	39	34	37	37
Eastern	32	33	48	53	29	43	29
Central	23	34	28	40	35	30	35
Western	41	33	27	35	43	36	51
Mid-Western	56	25	21	31	33	47	60
Far-Western	20	34	28	27	20	37	11

Table 6. Public's Preference toward a Secular State by Development Region.

The level of education has a significant influence on public's view in this matter. The public's preference for a Hindu state significantly decreases as the public's educational status increases. The highest level of support for a Hindu state is observed among those who are either illiterate

or have got informal education, while the lowest level of support is found among those who have completed either higher secondary level or bachelor's level education. However, degree of differences by educational status diminished during the later years of the surveys.

	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	59	59	59	55	57	56	55
Illiterate	60	60	62	55	58	57	53
Informal Education	58	58	57	60	57	56	58
Primary/lower secondary	58	61	63	57	61	59	54
Secondary	63	61	52	50	57	51	57
Higher secondary	56	51	48	47	51	56	48
Bachelor's and above	43	43	48	56	48	47	49

Table 7. Public's Preference toward a Hindu State by Educational Status.

Similarly, the public's preference for a secular state significantly increases as the public's educational status increases. The highest level of support toward a secular state is observed among those who have attained either higher

secondary level or bachelor's level decrees, while the lowest level of support is found among those who are either illiterate or have received informal education.

	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	31	32	31	39	34	37	37
Illiterate	22	23	20	32	24	27	27
Informal Education	32	31	31	34	33	34	34
Primary/lower secondary	37	33	33	40	32	36	43
Secondary	35	37	47	48	40	47	41
Higher secondary	43	49	50	51	48	43	51
Bachelor's and above	58	57	50	44	52	52	51

Table 8. Public's Preference toward a Secular State by Educational Status.

The surveys disclose that age is a significant variable influencing the public's view in this regard. Though a majority of the people, irrespective of age group, prefer a Hindu state, people belonging to younger age groups are less like-

ly to prefer their country to be a Hindu state, while people belonging to older age groups are more likely to prefer Nepal as a Hindu state.

	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	59	59	59	55	57	56	55
25 and Below	59	57	52	44	52	53	52
26-35	60	57	60	58	58	54	52
36-45	58	59	61	57	59	57	57
46-55	58	62	62	60	57	60	59
56-65	60	63	63	59	61	53	52
Above 65	61	64	63	57	61	62	57

Table 9. Public's Preference toward a Hindu State by Age Group.

Similarly, the level of the public's support for a secular state is highest among those who belong to the age group of 25 and younger. The support is the lowest among those

who are over 65 years of age. However, it is worthwhile to mention that a majority of the people in the younger age group too favor a Hindu state, not a secular one.

	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	31	32	31	39	34	37	37
25 and Below	35	36	39	52	41	43	42
26-35	30	33	32	37	34	39	39
36-45	32	32	30	37	33	35	35
46-55	32	28	28	33	31	32	32
56-65	28	28	20	27	26	38	38
Above 65	23	27	22	32	22	21	30

Table 10. Public's Preference toward a Secular State by Age Group.

The probability of the public's support toward a Hindu state is significantly influenced by their political party preference. Supporters of UCPN (Maoist) and small leftist parties (including Janmorcha Nepal, Nepal Majdur Kisan Party, CPN [ML] and Sanyukta Janmorcha) exhibit less preference toward a Hindu state than any other party supporters. The UCPN (Maoist) has been the first political party in Nepal which formally started a campaign with the objective to

establish a secular state. Supporters of Tarai-based regional parties and small rightist parties (including Rastriya Prajatantra Party [RPP], RPP Nepal, Rastriya Jansakti Party, Nepal Janta Party, and those who support the king) show the highest level of support toward a Hindu state, indicating their disagreement with the constitutional move toward secularism. The Nepali Congress and CPN (UML) supporters exhibit a moderate level of support toward a Hindu state.

	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	59	59	59	55	57	56	55
UCPN (Maoist)	51	45	53	49	51	45	41
Nepali Congress	70	62	64	67	67	64	60
CPN (UML)	53	52	62	54	59	59	57
Small rightist parties	71	74	77	74	78	67	70
Small leftist parties	50	55	68	65	52	64	38
Tarai based regional parties	79	84	80	65	68	78	76

Table 11. Public's Preference toward a Hindu State by Political Party Preference.

A majority of supporters of UCPN (Maoist) and small leftist parties shows support toward a secular state as of April 2012. Supporters of Tarai-based regional parties and small

rightist parties show the lowest level of support toward a secular state.

	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	31	32	31	39	34	37	37
UCPN (Maoist)	45	51	45	46	43	50	57
Nepali Congress	24	32	32	28	27	33	38
CPN (UML)	43	42	35	40	33	37	40
Small rightist parties	26	23	19	23	17	31	24
Small leftist parties	50	42	32	35	48	28	60
Tarai based regional parties	13	13	20	34	27	18	22

Table 12. Public's Preference toward a Secular State by Political Party Preference.

All of these results highlight that preference toward the Hindu state is not accepted by all kinds of groups at all of the sub-national levels. The public's preference for the secular state is evident at some of the sub-national levels, the

significance of which one should not undervalue and the potential for future growth in public support of which one should not underestimate.

Relationships Between Public Opinions on Different State Restructuring Issues

This section examines the relationship between public opinions on the religious issue and other state restructuring issues. The main reason for examining this relationship is to better understand how public opinions on various state restructuring issues converge to or diverge from each other.

The relationship is investigated first through bivariate correlation analysis and then through partial correlation analysis. After the correlation analyses, multiple regression is also performed for confirmation. First, Spearman's bivariate correlation coefficients (ρ) between the religious issue and other issues are calculated one by one to ascertain the association between the public opinions, since the data used are ranked values, not ratio scales (Snedecor and Cochran 1980: 192; Field 2009: 180). Then, partial correlation coefficients between two public opinions (out of which one always concerns opinions on the religious issue) are calculated one by one by controlling the effects of the other two opinions. Partial correlation coefficients are calculated because they produce a truer measure of the relationship between any two variables than bivariate correlation coefficients (Field, 2009: 189). Therefore, the relationship between public opinions is examined based on partial correlation analysis. In this article, only the relationship between the religious issue and other issues is explained, not the interrelationship between all of them.

Only two particular surveys have been used for this purpose: those conducted in September 2006 and January 2008. The reason for using only these two surveys is that these are the only surveys in which questions related to all of the four state restructuring issues (mentioned in the previous sections) were asked to respondents in the same survey.

Opinions that show agreement with the old structure of the Nepali state are coded 1, while those that show agree-

ment with the new structure are coded 2. For instance, "Hindu state" is coded 1 and "Secular state" 2; "Nepali language as the only official language" is coded 1 and "Other national languages as the official language" 2; "Unitary state" is coded 1 and "Federal state" 2; and "Monarchy" is coded 1 and "Republic" 2 in the respective questions. The "Other" responses, "Not understood", "Not heard" and "Do not know/ cannot say" are treated as missing and excluded from the correlation analysis.

Now let us look into the partial correlation analysis between the opinions from the September 2006 survey. The partial correlation coefficient between "Hindu state vs. Secular state" opinion and "Monarchy vs. Republic" opinion is positive and statistically significant ($r_{12.34} = .214$, p [two-tailed] $< .01$).²⁵ It can be concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between these two opinions: if the public supports a Hindu state, the same public also supports the monarchy and vice-versa. In the same way, if the public supports secularism, the same public also supports republicanism. It means that those people, who support the state's association with Hindu religion, also want Nepal to remain a monarchical state. In the same way, people who support the secular state also want Nepal to be a republican state.

The "Hindu state vs. Secular state" opinion has a statistically significant relationship with two other opinions: the "Unitary state vs. Secular state" and the "Nepali language as the only official language vs. Other national languages as official languages too" as of September 2006. The partial correlation coefficient between the "Hindu state vs. Secular state" opinion and the "Unitary state vs. Federal state" opinion is positive and statistically significant ($r_{13.24} = .165$, p [two-tailed] $< .05$).²⁶ This indicates that people who support the Hindu state also wish to see Nepal as a unitary state. Conversely, people who support the secular state also want Nepal to be a federal state.

	Monarchy vs. Republic	Hindu state vs. Secular state	Unitary state vs. Federal state	Nepali lang. vs. Other lang.
Spearman's Correlation Coefficients				
Hindu state vs. Secular state	.270** [2557]	1 [2713]	.219** [180]	.120** [2589]
Partial Correlation Coefficients				
Hindu state vs. Secular state	.214**	1	.165*	.188*

Table 13. Correlation Coefficients (Spearman's ρ) and Partial Correlation Coefficients between Various Public Opinions in the September 2006 Survey.

** Correlation is significant at 1% level of significance (two-tailed), * Correlation is significant at 5% level of significance (two-tailed), Number inside brackets is number of cases.

Similarly, the partial correlation coefficient between the “Hindu state vs. Secular state” opinion and the “Nepali language vs. Other national languages” opinion is positive and statistically significant ($r_{14.23} = .188$, p [two-tailed] $< .05$) in September 2006. This reveals that people who favor the Hindu state also like to have the Nepali language as the only official language in the country. Conversely, people who favor secularism also want to recognize other national languages as the official languages.

By January 2008 (around one-and-half years from September 2006), the relationship between the “Hindu state vs. Secular state” opinion and the public’s opinions on other state restructuring issues had changed remarkably. Though the relations between the “Hindu state vs. Secular state” opinion and the “Monarchy vs. Republic” opinion, and between the “Hindu state vs. Secular state” opinion and the “Unitary state vs. Secular state” opinion are positive and statistically significant as in September 2006, the relation between the “Hindu state vs. Secular state” opinion and the “Nepali language vs. Other national languages” opinion is not statistically significant in January 2008.

As of January 2008, the partial correlation analysis between the opinions reveals that the relationship between “Hindu state vs. Secular state” opinion and “Monarchy vs. Republic” opinion is positive and statistically significant ($r_{12.34} = .26$, p [two-tailed] $< .01$). In other words, the public’s support toward the Hindu state and the monarchical state converge. Conversely, the public’s support toward the secular state and the republican state also converge.

Similarly, the relationship between the “Hindu state vs. Secular state” opinion and the “Unitary state vs. Federal state” opinion is also positive and statistically significant ($r_{13.24} = .087$, p [two-tailed] $< .05$). This indicates that the public’s support for the Hindu state and the unitary state converge. Conversely, the public’s support toward the secular state and the federal state also converge.

Unlike in September 2006, in January 2008 the “Hindu state vs. Secular state” opinion has no significant relationship with the “Nepali language vs. Other national languages” opinion.

	Monarchy vs. Republic	Hindu state vs. Secular state	Unitary state vs. Federal state	Nepali lang. vs. Other lang.
Spearman’s Correlation Coefficients				
Hindu state vs. Secular state	.165**	1	.084*	.053**
	[2725]	[3027]	[701]	[2868]
Partial Correlation Coefficients				
Hindu state vs. Secular state	.260**	1	.087*	.071

Table 14. Correlation Coefficients (Spearman’s rho) and Partial Correlation Coefficients between Various Public Opinions in the January 2008 Survey.

** Correlation is significant at 1% level of significance (two-tailed), * Correlation is significant at 5% level of significance (two-tailed), Number inside brackets is number of cases

In order to further confirm the results of the partial correlation analyses, I employ a binary logistic regression model²⁷ for each survey, with the public’s opinion on the religious issue (i.e. Hindu state vs. Secular state) as the dependent variable (i.e. outcome) and other three opinions on republicanism, federalism, and multilingualism as the independent variables (i.e. predictors). Since the coefficient of correlation (both bivariate correlation and partial correlation) among these three independent variables is not high in the both the September 2006 and January 2008 survey data (see Table 2.1 and 2.2 of Annex-2), multicollinearity does not exist. This validates the presence of these three independent variables in the regression model, and confirms that the regression model predicts the outcome variable.

I find that all three independent variables significantly contribute in predicting the outcome through the binary logistic regression model in the September 2006 survey. Supporters of republicanism are more likely to support a secular state compared to those who support a monarchy by 170 percent ($\text{Exp}[B] = 2.702$), because the beta coefficient for this variable is positive (0.994) and significant at $p < 0.01$. Since the beta coefficient is positive (0.861) and significant at $p < 0.05$, supporters of federalism are more likely to support a secular state compared to those who support a unitary state by 136 percent ($\text{Exp}[B] = 2.365$). Similarly, supporters of multi-lingualism are more likely to support a secular state compared to those who support single-lingualism by 130 percent ($\text{Exp}[B] = 2.302$), since the beta coefficient is positive (0.834) and significant at $p < 0.05$.

	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Monarchy (1) vs. Republic (2)	0.994**	0.359	2.702
Unitary state (1) vs. Federal state (2)	0.861*	0.405	2.365
Nepali language (1) vs. Other languages (2)	0.834*	0.338	2.302
Constant	-4.055***	1.012	0.017
N	175		

Table 15 Binary Logistic Regression with Public's Opinion on Religious Issue as the Dependent Variable (1 = Hindu state, 2 = Secular state) in the September 2006 Survey.

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05 (two-tailed)

According to the January 2008 survey, two out of the three independent variables significantly contribute through the model in predicting the outcome. The public's opinion on the linguistic issue has no significant influence on the outcome. However, supporters of republicanism are more likely to support a secular state compared to those who support a monarchy by 228 percent (Exp[B] = 3.278), because the

beta coefficient for this independent variable is positive (1.187) and significant at $p < 0.001$. Similarly, supporters of federalism are more likely to support a secular state compared to those who support a unitary state by 55 percent (Exp[B] = 1.553), since the beta coefficient is positive (0.440) and significant at $p < 0.05$.

	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Monarchy (1) vs. Republic (2)	1.187***	0.194	3.278
Unitary state (1) vs. Federal state (2)	0.440*	0.211	1.553
Nepali language (1) vs. Other languages (2)	0.309	0.182	1.362
Constant	-3.229***	0.587	0.040
N	596		

Table 16. Binary Logistic Regression with Public's Opinion on Religious Issue as the Dependent Variable (1 = Hindu state, 2 = Secular state) in the January 2008 Survey.

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05 (two-tailed)

Thus, the binary logistic regression results further support the partial correlation results. All variables that are significant in the partial correlation tests are statistically significant in the multiple regression models too. Similarly, the one variable (opinion on the linguistic issue) that is insignificant in the partial correlation test (in the January 2008 survey) is statistically insignificant in the multiple regression model too. Both the partial correlation and multiple regression analyses provide confirmatory evidence that the public's support toward one new characteristic of the state structure considerably corroborates with another new characteristic of the state structure as well. If the public agree with one new feature of the state, they also agree with another new feature of the state and vice-versa. As of September 2006, there is a statistically significant and positive relationship between the public's agreement

toward the "Secular state" and other three new features of the Nepali state structure, i.e. "Republican state", "Federal state", and "Multi-linguistic state". However, the relationship between the "Secular state" opinion and the "Multi-linguistic" opinion is not statistically significant in January 2008. It may possibly be due to the decline in the support of the *madhesi* communities (including the *madhesi* caste group, Tarai indigenous group and *dalit*) toward the Nepali language between September 2006 and January 2008. Another study conducted by this author reveals that majority of all the *madhesi* communities wants the country to adopt the multi-linguistic policy and stop the domination of the Nepali language. They increasingly demand that other languages spoken in the country should also be recognized as the official language at the local level as of January 2008 (Sen 2013: 202). On the other, the support of

the *madhesi* communities (particularly *madhesi* caste group and *dalit*) toward the Hindu state has grown up by January 2008 compared to September 2006 (see Table 3). This means that these groups of the people are increasingly in the favor of other national languages i.e. a new characteristic of the state (in the context of language) as of January 2008. In contrast, these people are even more supporting for the Hindu state i.e. an old characteristic of the state (in the context of religion) as of January 2008. Because of this, the overall relation between the “Hindu state vs. Secular state” opinion and the “Nepali language vs. Other national languages” opinion may have become weak and insignificant in January 2008. However, the relationship stays significant with the other two opinions. This indicates that the public’s opinion on the issue of secularism has become more important with regard to the issue of republicanism and federalism than with regard to the linguistic issue in the later year.

Therefore, the main argument in this section is that the general public’s support for or opposition to secularism converges with their support for or opposition to the other three state structure issues: republicanism, federalism, and multi-lingualism. Similarly, their agreement or disagreement with a Hindu state converges with their agreement or disagreement with monarchy, unitary state, and mono-lingualism. However, the statistical association between secularism and multi-lingualism is weak as of January 2008.

Conclusion

Though the majority of the Nepali public has not embraced the secular state as yet at the national level, the minority of the people who support the move to secularism is also substantial, and they are even in the majority at some of the sub-national levels. They include all types of groups: Buddhists, Muslims, Kirati, Christians, the hill indigenous group, supporters of UCPN (Maoist), and small leftist parties. Significant minorities of the people other than these groups also wish to see their country to become a secular state. Thus, a significant segment of the Nepali populace is inclined toward secularism.

The public’s opinion on one issue of state restructuring significantly influences its opinion on another issue of state restructuring as well. There is a statistically significant relationship between the “Hindu state vs. Secular state” opinion and the other three opinions related to state restructuring issues as of September 2006. But the relationship between the religious issue and the linguistic issue was no longer statistically significant in January 2008. The issue of secularism is statistically significant in relation to the issues of federalism and republicanism in that year. This emphasizes the significant contribution of the public’s opinion on

the issue of federalism and republicanism to the public’s opinion on the issue of secularism in the recent past. In other words, supporters of secularism also tend to support republicanism and federalism, while supporters of a Hindu state tend to support the monarchy and a unitary state. Since Nepal has already been declared a federal republican state, the country’s secular identity is now more justified.

The Nepali identity promoted before April 2006 was based on cultural monopoly of the Hindu high caste hill group. It was not based on inclusion, pluralism, and multiculturalism. This mono-cultural value based identity was erected on the suppression and exclusion of other groups, but plurality and multicultural values are a growing reality in Nepali society. Since Nepal is in the process of writing a new Constitution, this is a golden opportunity to legally recognize the voices of all minorities. If Nepal’s democracy is to become a truly pluralist and inclusive democracy, the new Constitution needs to reflect the voices of the minorities in all its relevant clauses. This will not only guarantee the arrival of an inclusive democracy, but also make the whole population, including all its minorities, true owners of the land and its Constitution.

Pawan Kumar Sen is interested in contemporary political issues and state restructuring in Nepal, in particular republicanism, federalism, secularism and multilingualism. He has experience in quantitative research methodologies and the analysis of large-scale survey data. He is currently working on his doctoral dissertation, entitled “Opinions of the Political Elites and the General Public: Exploring the Determinants of Political Change in Nepal in Times of Transition,” at Leiden University, the Netherlands.

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Endnotes

1. Multiple regression analyses help to show the relationship between two or more than two variables and explain the strength of associations among them.
2. The first session of the elected Constituent Assembly has already declared the country federal democratic republic on 28 May 2008.
3. Unlike in orthodox Hinduism, Tarai brahman was ranked, not only lower than hill brahman but also lower than hill chhetri and thakuri (Gurung 1997: 502; Lawati 2010: 85). But in Nepal’s Tarai and India’s gangetic plains, caste rules are followed as closely as possible to the classical Hindu pattern in which brahman (i.e. Tarai brahman) has always had the highest status. Dor Bahadur Bista, a prominent Nepali anthropologist, even calls the Hindu religion practiced in the hills of Nepal a pseudo-Hindu religion (Bista 1967: 110), and says that the caste system in Nepal varies greatly from the orthodox caste societies found elsewhere (Bista 1991: 3).
4. The UCPN (Maoist) was previously called CPN (Maoist) until it formally unified with the People’s Front Nepal (Janmorcha Nepal in Nepali language) in January 2009. Not to be confused with other leftist parties with similar names like the CPN-Maoist (note the dash in between), and the CPN Maoist (without dash in between).
5. It was the policy called by Koirala in December 1976 on the return from exile through which he wanted to make a compromise between the monarchy and his party, Nepali Congress, to protect Nepal’s national sovereignty and identity.
6. It was an alliance formed by the seven agitating parliamentary political parties on May 2005, to protest against the king’s take-over of 1 February 2005 (when the incumbent king Gyanendra dismissed the appointed Deuba government, declaring a state of emergency and taking all executive powers).
7. Article 4(1) of the “Interim Constitution on Nepal 2007” states that “Nepal is an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive and fully democratic state” (Law Books Management Board 2007). There is no mention of republicanism and federalism.
8. After the fourth amendment, Article 4(1) of the “Interim Constitution on Nepal 2007” states that “Nepal is an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive and federal democratic republic state” (Law Books Management Board 2012).
9. Only from 1909 onwards, the Rana rulers began to call the country they ruled ‘Nepal’ (Gellner 1997: 5).
10. Prithvi Narayan Shah became the king of Gorkha principality in 1743. The conquest started in 1744 and came to a halt in 1816, when the Gorkha Empire and the British East India Company signed the Treaty of Sugauli.
11. Bhattachan (2001:47) writes that the rulers of Nepal used coercive measures of Hinduization, Sanskritization, and Nepalization to eliminate or at least minimize the diversity of language, religion, society, and culture. Another scholar, Leitzia (2013: 33), says that the Nepali state pressured the ethnic groups to adopt the language and culture of the dominant groups (i.e. bahun and chhetri) under the homogenization and Nepalization scheme.
12. The Hindu caste system was introduced in Gorkha principality by the king Ram Shah (reigned 1603–1636) (Gurung 1997: 501).
13. Gyanmani Nepal, a prominent Nepali historian, says that Jaysthiti Malla had categorized newar community of Kathmandu Valley (which was called Nepal Valley at that time) in 52 castes (2055 BS [1999]: 192).
14. The cow is considered to be the sacred animal in Hindu religion. Killing it and consuming beef are strict taboos in Hindu society.
15. Article 4(1) of the “Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990” states that “Nepal is a multiethnic, multilingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign, Hindu and Constitutional Monarchical Kingdom” (Law Books Management Board 2004).

16. See footnote 15.

17. Still today, according to Clause 7(1) of Part IV of the current Civil Code 1963, any deliberate slaughtering of a cow is legally banned. Clause 7(11) of Part IV clearly mentions the 12 years of imprisonment for those who kill a cow deliberately. Additionally, Clause 4(1) of Part IV states that a person will be exempted from any punishment if that person kills someone to prevent a cow being slaughtered (Kanun Kitab Byawastha Samiti 2061 BS [2005]).

18. The starting points for the random-walk are recognizable locations such as schools, crossroads, chautaras (raised platforms of earth and stones with a tree at the centre made beside roads and used as resting places), bazaars, temples, mosques, etc. At first, interviewers start to walk towards any direction randomly (using Spin-the-bottle technique) from a starting point, counting the number of households at the same time. Based on the overall number of households, required numbers of households are selected using a systematic sampling.

19. Use of the Kish grid ensures that each eligible member in a selected household has an equal chance of being selected for the interview.

20. A scientific quantitative survey conducted with random (probability) sampling techniques produces a generalizable set of findings (Patton 1990; Sayer 1992; Weisberg 2008)

21. Representative opinion polls measure the public opinions of a population of interest (Kepplinger 2008; Weisberg 2008).

22. Methodology of the surveys must be similar if findings of these surveys need to be compared with each other (Hellevik 2008).

23. Nepali people are divided into eight broad groups of ethnicity in this research: hill caste group (that includes upper caste Hindus: chhetri, bahun, thakuri and sanyasi); hill indigenous group (that includes non-Hindu Mongolian communities: magar, tamang, rai, gurung, limbu, sherpa, etc.); hill dalit (that includes lower caste Hindus: kami, damai, sarki, etc.); newar; madhesi caste group (that includes upper and middle caste Hindus: yadav, teli, koiri, kurmi, brahmin, rajput, kayastha, etc.); Tarai indigenous group (that includes tharu, dhanuk, rajbansi, danuwar, dhimal, meche, koche, etc.); madhesi dalit (that includes lower caste Hindus: chamar, musahar, paswan, dhobi, bantar, etc.); and Muslims. Any Nepali man and woman can be categorized in one of these eight groups of ethnicity. According the 2011 census, their proportions to the total population of Nepal are: 31 percent hill caste group; 23 percent hill indigenous group; 8 percent hill dalit; 5 percent newar; 16 percent madhesi caste group; 9 percent

Tarai indigenous group; 4 percent madhesi dalit; and 4 percent Muslims.

24. Data on Muslims in the sense of ethnicity and of religious affiliation do not match perfectly. This happens because some people from madhesi castes such as yadav, dusadh, kanu, musahar, kewat, dhanuk, dhobi, teli, hajam, halwai, etc. (in which the majority are Hindus) identify themselves as Muslims.

25. For simplicity, the “Hindu state vs. Secular state” opinion is labeled as Variable-1, the “Monarchy vs. Republic” opinion is labeled as Variable-2, the “Unitary state vs. Federal state” as Variable-3, and “Nepali language as the only official language vs. Other national languages as the official languages too” as Variable-4. Therefore, $r_{12,34}^{12,34}$ denotes the partial correlation coefficient between Variable-1 and Variable-2 eliminating the effects of Variable-3 and Variable-4.

26. The question on “federal state or unitary state” was a filtered question. The survey respondents were first asked whether they had heard of federalism. Only those respondents, who had said they had heard of it, were eligible to reply whether they wished Nepal to be a federal state or unitary state. Those, who had not heard of it or could not give a definitive answer, were not eligible to answer the “federal state vs. unitary state” question. Because of that, not all respondents were supposed to answer this question. As of September 2006, only 180 respondents had said that they had heard of federalism, and thus were the only ones who were eligible to reply whether they wanted a federal state or unitary state. This number was 701 as of January 2008. In the binary logistic regression performed in the latter part of this section, the number of cases has even gone down, which is logical. Multiple regression analysis considers only those cases where there are non-missing responses in all variables. If one variable has a missing response, the entire case is withdrawn from the analysis.

27. The reason for employing the binary logistic regression model is due to the binary nature of the dependent variable. Public’s opinion on religious issue (i.e. opinion on “Hindu state vs. Secular state”) is taken as the dependent variable for which public’s responses are coded as 1 for “Hindu state” opinion and 2 for “Secular state” opinion.

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Annex-1: Beta Coefficients Given by Binary Logistic Regression with Religious Issue as the Dependent Variable (1 = Hindu state, 2 = Secular state)

	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Hindu (Reference)				
Buddhist	0.917***	1.763***	2.666***	0.987***
Muslim	2.155	3.020***	4.896**	4.060***
Christian	1.053	3.754***	2.312***	1.973***
Kirati	2.572***	3.123***	1.622***	1.766***
Hill caste group (Reference)				
Hill indigenous group	0.275	0.229	0.619***	0.864***
Hill Dalit	-0.098	-0.394	0.349	0.277
Newar	-0.209	0.348	0.399	-0.102
Madhesi caste group	-0.824***	-0.325*	-0.764***	-0.019
Tarai indigenous group	-1.125***	-0.820***	-0.306	-0.163
Madhesi Dalit	-1.134***	-0.104	-1.331**	-0.571*
Muslim	0.386	1.212	-1.230	-0.994
Eastern DR (Reference)				
Central DR	-0.662***	-0.039	-0.949***	-0.386**
Western DR	0.216	0.274	-0.820***	-0.615***
Mid-western DR	0.916***	0.075	-0.779***	-0.658***
Far-western DR	-0.853***	0.608***	-0.614**	-1.044***
Illiterate (Reference)				
Informal education	0.351*	0.336*	0.750***	0.008
Primary/lower secondary	0.481***	0.240	0.692***	0.067
Secondary	0.584***	0.609***	1.370***	0.396**
Higher secondary	0.913***	1.087***	1.422***	0.656***
Bachelor's and above	1.227***	1.369***	1.892***	0.531
18 – 25 (Reference)				
26 – 35	-0.063	-0.018	-0.303*	-0.480***
36 – 45	0.044	-0.257	-0.216	-0.389**
46 – 55	0.114	-0.144	-0.259	-0.614***
56 – 65	0.037	-0.229	-0.472*	-0.804***
Above 65	-0.320	-0.431	-0.893**	-0.617*
UCPN (Maoist) (Reference)				
Nepali Congress	-1.042***	-0.779***	-0.345	-0.918***
CPN (UML)	-0.291	-0.302	-0.314	-0.492**
Small rightist parties	-1.134***	-1.351***	-0.898*	-1.333**
Small leftist parties	0.135	-0.396	-0.044	-0.330
Tarai based regional parties	-1.721*	-1.627**	-0.616	-0.724**
Constant	-0.186	-0.655**	-0.628*	0.314
N	2676	2724	2730	2816

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05 (two-tailed)

	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
	Beta	Beta	Beta
Hindu (Reference)			
Buddhist	0.569**	1.967***	1.555***
Muslim	3.046***	2.716**	2.635*
Christian	3.386***	1.690***	4.938***
Kirati	1.874***	1.226***	3.493***
Hill caste group (Reference)			
Hill indigenous group	0.778***	0.893***	0.804***
Hill Dalit	0.188	0.163	0.041
Newar	0.013	0.320	0.350
Madhesi caste group	-0.235	0.044	-0.461**
Tarai indigenous group	-0.075	1.222***	0.206
Madhesi Dalit	-0.035	-0.005	0.063
Muslim	-0.349	0.670	0.530
Eastern DR (Reference)			
Central DR	0.514***	-0.962***	0.707***
Western DR	0.721***	-0.416**	1.808***
Mid-western DR	0.146	0.220	2.232***
Far-western DR	-0.682**	-0.255	-0.619**
Illiterate (Reference)			
Informal education	0.431**	0.205	0.336*
Primary/lower secondary	0.204	0.372*	0.687***
Secondary	0.753***	0.783***	0.930***
Higher secondary	0.996***	0.850***	1.419***
Bachelor's and above	1.434***	1.339***	1.241***
18 – 25 (Reference)			
26 – 35	-0.224	-0.050	0.105
36 – 45	-0.194	-0.062	0.133
46 – 55	-0.100	-0.067	-0.158
56 – 65	-0.279	0.184	0.195
Above 65	-0.645*	-0.308	-0.071
UCPN (Maoist) (Reference)			
Nepali Congress	-0.873***	-0.633***	-0.744***
CPN (UML)	-0.587***	-0.606***	-0.460*
Small rightist parties	-1.835***	-0.889*	-1.475**
Small leftist parties	-0.330	-1.431*	0.329
Tarai based regional parties	-1.000***	-1.231***	-1.171**
Constant	-0.906***	-0.599**	-1.813***
N	2724	2765	2764

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05 (two-tailed)

If Beta coefficient is significantly positive, the respective category of the people is more likely to prefer secular state compared to the Reference category.

If Beta coefficient is significantly negative, the respective category of the people is less likely to prefer secular state compared to the Reference category.

Annex-2: Correlation among the Three Independent Variables (Predictors)

Table 2.1. Correlation Coefficients (Spearman's rho) and Partial Correlation Coefficients among the Three Predictors in the September 2006 Survey

	Monarchy vs. Republic	Unitary state vs. Federal state	Nepali language vs. Other language
Spearman's Correlation Coefficients			
Monarchy vs. Republic	1	.126	.021
	[2776]	[177]	[2608]
Unitary state vs. Federal state	.126	1	.173**
	[177]	[181]	[180]
Nepali language vs. Other language	.021	.173*	1
	[2608]	[180]	[2788]
Partial Correlation Coefficients			
Monarchy vs. Republic	1	.065	.086
Unitary state vs. Federal state	.065	1	.136
Nepali language vs. Other language	.086	.136	1

** Correlation is significant at 1% level of significance (two-tailed), * Correlation is significant at 5% level of significance (two-tailed), Number inside brackets is number of cases

Table 2.2. Correlation Coefficients (Spearman's rho) and Partial Correlation Coefficients among the Three Predictors in the January 2008 Survey

	Monarchy vs. Republic	Unitary state vs. Federal state	Nepali language vs. Other language
Spearman's Correlation Coefficients			
Monarchy vs. Republic	1	-.015	-.056**
	[2921]	[679]	[2720]
Unitary state vs. Federal state	-.015	1	.162**
	[679]	[706]	[681]
Nepali language vs. Other language	-.056**	.162**	1
	[2720]	[681]	[3060]
Partial Correlation Coefficients			
Monarchy vs. Republic	1	-.005	-.129
Unitary state vs. Federal state	-.005	1	.172**
Nepali language vs. Other language	-.129	.172**	1

** Correlation is significant at 1% level of significance (two-tailed), * Correlation is significant at 5% level of significance (two-tailed), Number inside brackets is number of cases

Annex-3: Comparison between the National Population Census 2001 and the Samples

Table 3.1. Comparison between the Population and the Sample of the September 2006 Survey

Demographic Variable	Population	Sample
Development Region		
Eastern	23.1	19.4
Central	34.7	41.3
Western	19.7	17.5
Mid-Western	13.0	11.5
Far-Western	9.5	10.3
Total	100.0	100.0
Ecological Region		
Mountain	7.3	8.7
Hill	44.3	47.9
Tarai	48.4	43.4
Total	100.0	100.0
Caste/Ethnic Group		
Chhetri	15.8	17.6
Brahmin (Hill)	12.7	12.9
Magar	7.1	5.6
Tharu	6.8	4.7
Tamang	5.6	4.3
Newar	5.5	7.4
Muslim	4.3	4.4
Kami	3.9	2.4
Yadav	3.9	4.3
Rai	2.8	1.9
Gurung	2.4	1.8
Damai/Dholi	1.7	1.6
Limbu	1.6	1.7
Thakuri	1.5	2.5
Sarki	1.4	0.5
Teli	1.3	0.8
Koiri	1.1	0.4
Kurmi	0.9	0.2
Sanyasi	0.9	0.6
Brahmin (Tarai)	0.6	1.3
Kumal	0.4	0.3
Rajbansi	0.4	1.3
Khatwe	0.3	0.8
Others	16.9	20.9
Total	100.0	100.0
Religion		
Hindu	80.7	85.5
Buddhist	10.7	7.2
Muslim	4.2	4.5
Kirati	3.6	2.2
Christian	0.5	0.5
Atheist	0.0	0.1
Others	0.3	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Note: Since some caste/ethnic groups are slightly over or under represented, a weighting factor was assigned to each group to make it representative of the national population.

Table 3.2. Comparison between the Population and the Sample of the January 2008 Survey

Demographic Variable	Population	Sample	Demographic Variable	Population	Sample
Development Region			Caste/Ethnic Group		
Eastern	23.1	21.5	Kumal	0.44	0.23
Central	34.7	39.9	Hajam	0.43	0.80
Western	19.7	15.4	Kanu	0.42	0.53
Mid-Western	13.0	13.2	Rajbansi	0.42	0.27
Far-Western	9.5	10.0	Sunuwar	0.42	0.13
Total	100.0	100.0	Sudhi	0.40	0.93
Ecological Region			Lohar	0.36	0.76
Mountain	7.3	5.5	Tatma	0.34	0.40
Hill	44.3	44.6	Khatwe	0.33	0.37
Tarai	48.4	49.9	Majhi	0.32	0.56
Total	100.0	100.0	Dhobi	0.32	0.07
Caste/Ethnic Group			Nuniya	0.29	0.56
Chhetri	15.80	16.45	Kumhar	0.24	0.20
Bahun	12.74	15.12	Danuwar	0.23	0.50
Magar	7.14	8.41	Chepanang	0.23	0.23
Tharu	6.75	4.15	Haluwai	0.22	0.10
Tamang	5.64	4.75	Rajput	0.21	0.03
Newar	5.48	7.24	Kayastha	0.20	0.17
Muslim	4.27	2.62	Satar	0.19	0.10
Yadav	3.94	5.68	Marwadi	0.19	0.03
Kami/Biswokarma	3.94	3.09	Barahi	0.16	0.37
Rai	2.79	2.49	Bantar	0.16	0.07
Gurung	2.39	2.82	Kahar	0.15	0.10
Damai/Pariyar	1.72	1.76	Rajbhar	0.11	0.03
Limbu	1.58	1.76	Dhimal	0.09	0.03
Thakuri	1.47	2.43	Bhediya	0.08	0.03
Sarki/Mijar	1.40	0.63	Darai	0.07	0.07
Teli	1.34	1.66	Thakali	0.06	0.20
Chamar/Harijan	1.19	0.56	Tajpuriya	0.06	0.13
Koiri	1.11	0.70	Mali	0.05	0.03
Kurmi	0.94	0.83	Badi	0.02	0.13
Sanyasi	0.88	0.23	Meche	0.02	0.03
Dhanuk	0.83	1.23	Sikh	0.01	0.03
Musahar	0.76	0.96	Others	3.28	0.96
Sherpa	0.76	0.13	Total	100.00	100.00
Dusadh	0.70	0.50	Religion		
Sonar	0.64	0.47	Hindu	80.7	84.1
Kewat	0.60	0.37	Buddhist	10.7	7.3
Tarai Brahman	0.59	0.93	Muslim	4.2	4.3
Baniya	0.55	0.53	Christian	0.5	1.1
Bhujel	0.52	0.70	Kirati	3.6	3.1
Mallah	0.51	0.90	Atheist	0.0	0.1
Kalwar	0.51	0.70	Total	100.0	100.0

Note: Since some caste/ethnic groups are slightly over or under represented, a weighting factor was assigned to each group to make it representative of the national population.

Table 3.3. Comparison between the Population and the Sample of the June 2011 Survey

Demographic Variable	Population	Sample	Demographic Variable	Population	Sample
Development Region			Caste/Ethnic Group		
Eastern	23.1	21.1	Sunuwar	0.4	0.6
Central	34.7	33.9	Kanu	0.4	0.2
Western	19.7	20.8	Rajbansi	0.4	0.7
Mid-Western	13.0	13.2	Sudhi	0.4	1.3
Far-Western	9.5	10.9	Lohar	0.4	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	Tatma	0.3	0.4
Ecological Region			Khatwe	0.3	0.3
Mountain	7.3	7.4	Majhi	0.3	0.0
Hill	44.3	45.1	Dhobi	0.3	0.5
Tarai	48.4	47.6	Nuniya	0.3	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	Kumhar	0.2	0.5
Caste/Ethnic Group			Chepang	0.2	0.0
Chhetri	15.8	12.3	Halwai	0.2	0.8
Bahun	12.7	12.0	Rajput	0.2	0.5
Magar	7.1	7.9	Kayastha	0.2	0.2
Tharu	6.8	5.6	Marwadi	0.2	0.1
Tamang	5.6	6.3	Satar	0.2	0.1
Newar	5.5	5.2	Jhangar	0.2	0.3
Muslim	4.3	3.9	Bantar	0.2	0.1
Yadav	3.9	4.8	Barai	0.2	0.4
Kami/BK	3.9	2.8	Kahar	0.2	0.3
Rai	2.8	3.2	Gangai	0.1	1.1
Gurung	2.4	2.1	Lodha	0.1	0.0
Damai/Pariyar	1.7	1.4	Rajbhar	0.1	0.0
Limbu	1.6	3.9	Dhimal	0.1	0.0
Thakuri	1.5	2.0	Bhote	0.1	1.3
Sarki/Mijar	1.4	0.9	Yakha	0.1	0.0
Teli	1.3	2.8	Darai	0.1	0.1
Chamar	1.2	1.6	Tajpuriya	0.1	0.3
Koiri	1.1	0.7	Thakali	0.1	0.0
Kurmi	0.9	1.3	Mali	0.1	0.1
Sanyasi	0.9	0.2	Bangali	0.0	0.0
Dhanuk	0.8	0.7	Gandharva	0.0	0.0
Musahar	0.8	0.3	Badi	0.0	0.1
Sherpa	0.8	0.1	Others	3.0	0.3
Dusadh	0.7	0.9	Total	100.0	100.0
Sonar	0.6	0.1	Religion		
Kewat	0.6	1.2	Hindu	80.7	82.7
Tarai Brahman	0.6	0.9	Buddhist	10.7	8.0
Baniya	0.6	0.9	Muslim	4.2	4.2
Gharti/Bhujel	0.5	0.2	Christian	0.5	1.8
Kalwar	0.5	0.9	Kirati	3.6	2.9
Mallaha	0.5	0.7	Atheist	0.0	0.4
Kumal	0.4	0.4	Total	100.0	100.0
Hajam	0.4	0.3			

Note: Since some caste/ethnic groups are slightly over or under represented, a weighting factor was assigned to each group to make it representative of the national population.